

# BICS & CALP

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# History

- Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) drew attention to the distinction between academic and social language ability.

They studied Finnish immigrant children in Sweden.

They found these students had high social language ability in Swedish but performed poorly on academic tasks.

# More History....



- Jim Cummins developed the acronyms of BICS and CALP in 1979.
- He did extensive research in Quebec and he discovered two dimensions of language: academic and social.

# Cummins's Reasons

- Understanding an immigrant student's small talk is not an indicator of his/her ability to complete academic tasks.
- Teachers should learn the difference between BICS and CALP so that they can assess their students' proficiency in two distinct areas and provide appropriate education.



# Introduction



- BICS stands for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills.
- CALP stands for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.

# Definition



- BICS: Face-to face conversational fluency, including mastery of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.
- English language learners typically acquire conversational language used in everyday activities before they develop more complex, conceptual language proficiency.



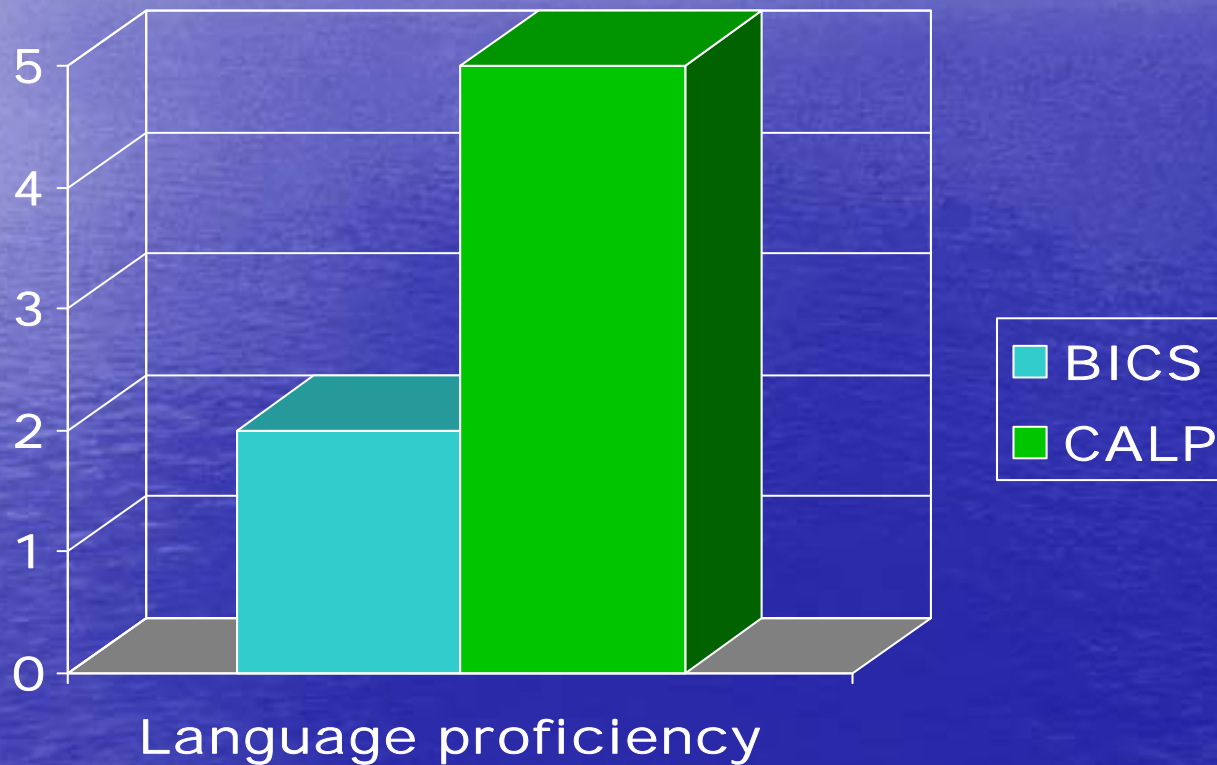
# Definition

- CALP: Language proficiency associated with schooling, and the abstract language abilities required for academic work.
- A more complex, conceptual, linguistic ability that includes analysis, synthesis and evaluation.



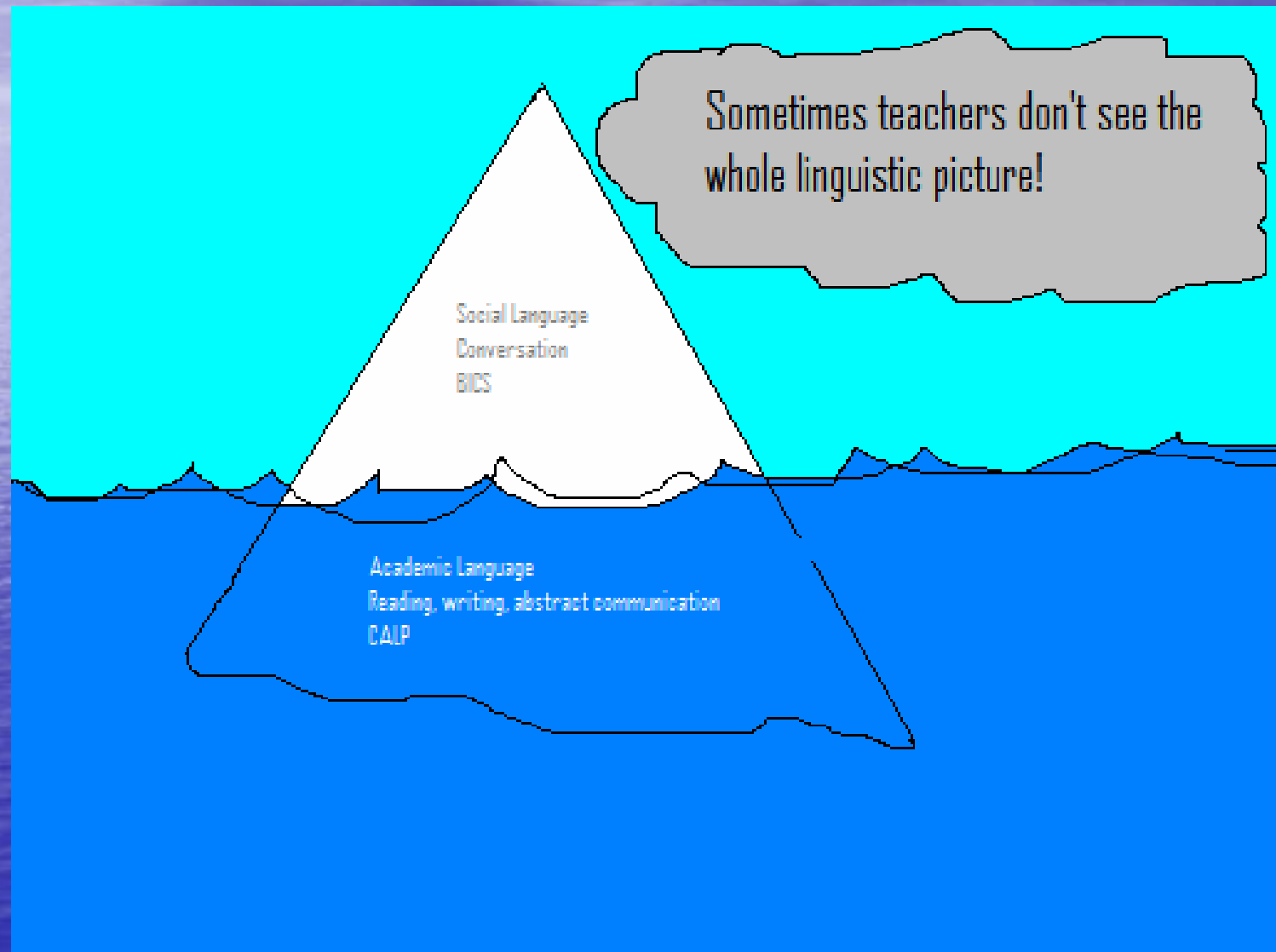


# It Takes Time...

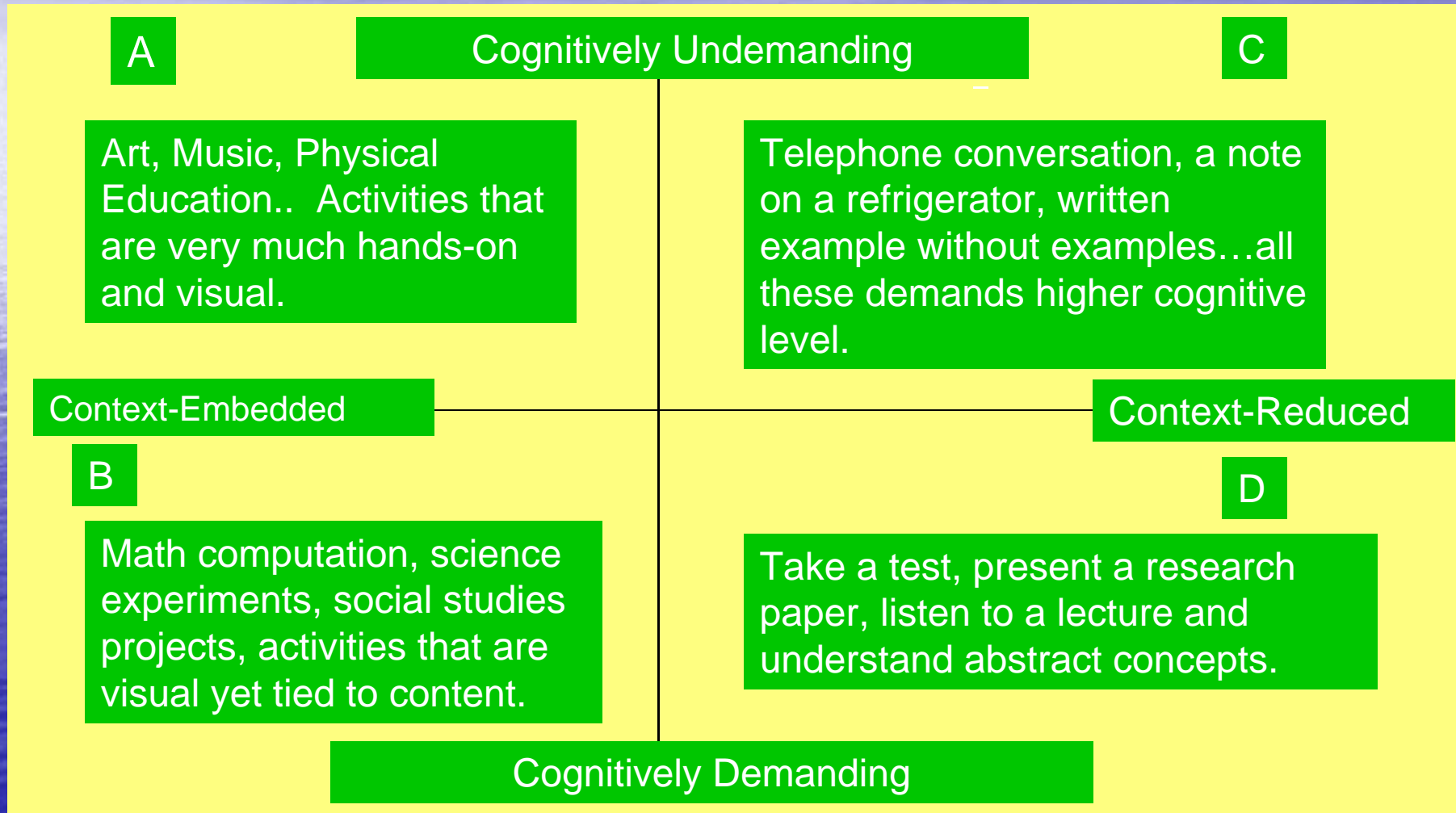




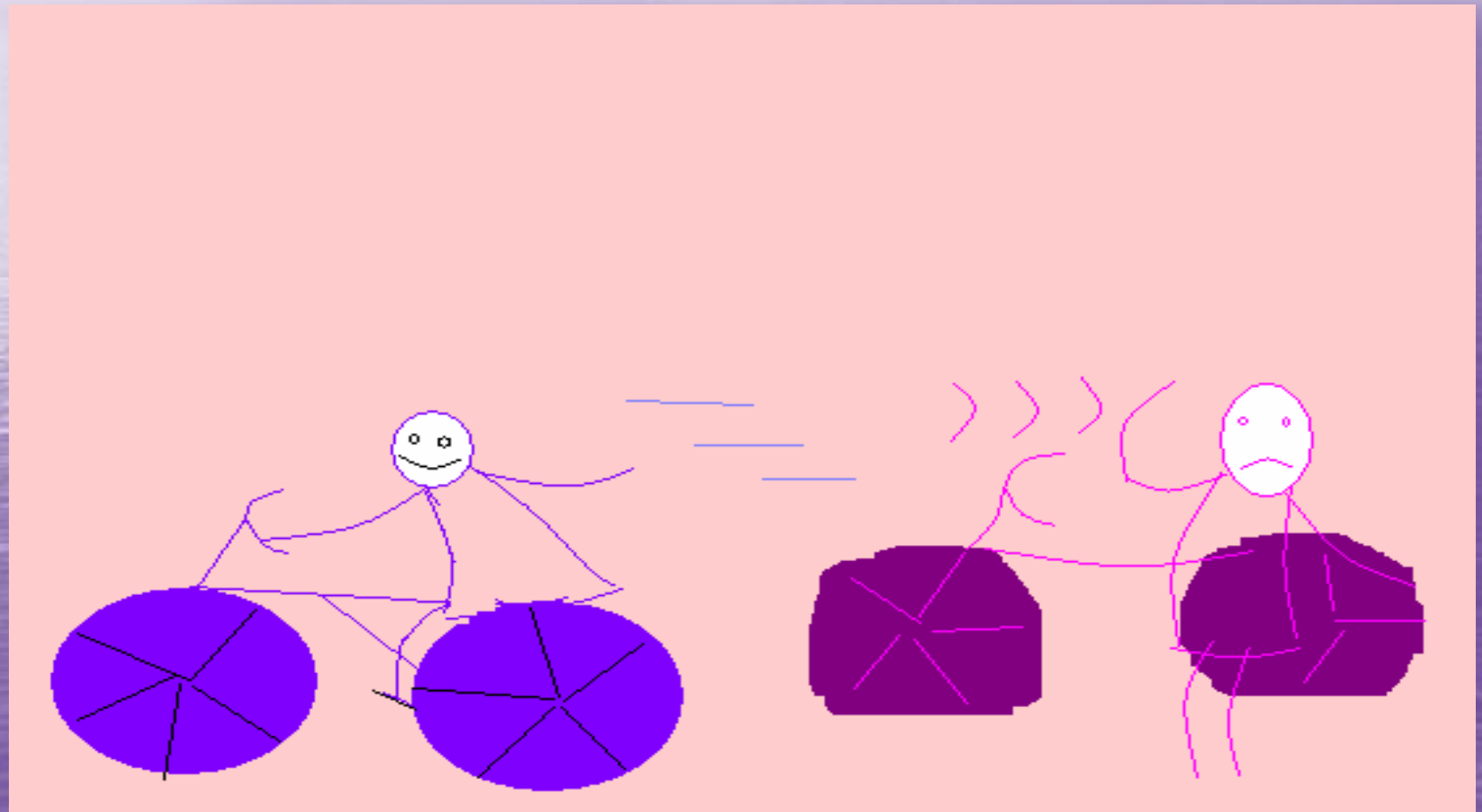
# Importance of BICS and CALP



# Four Quadrants Model



# Bicycle Model



# Practical Difference

BICS is more literal language while CALP is more abstract.

- Circle

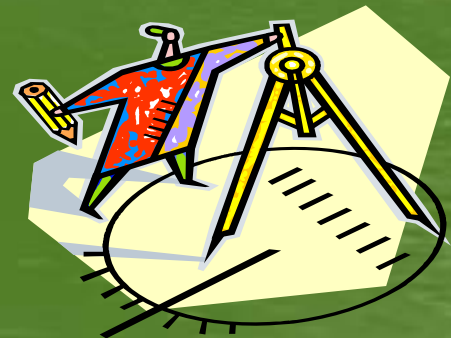
BICS: to walk around something

CALP: to draw circle around something

- Skim

BICS: to glide on a surface

CALP: to read quickly for a main point





# Factors that determine one's ability to acquire CALP

- Prior schooling and experience using complex language.
- Level of literacy in the first language.

Reading achievement in English is more dependent on reading achievement in their native language than it is on relative oral proficiency in English.
- Amount of exposure and practice in the second language.

# Criticisms of BICS & CALP

- "Conversational/Academic distinction reflects an autonomous perspective on language which ignores its location in social practices and power relations."
- "CALP or academic language proficiency represents little more than "test-wiseness." It is an artifact of the inappropriate way in which it has been measured."
- "The notion of CALP promotes a deficit theory insofar as it attributes the academic failure of bilingual/minority students to low cognitive/academic proficiency rather than to inappropriate schooling."

# What ESL Teachers should know



- The TESOL ESL Standards (1997) state: “In school environments, ESL students need to be able to use spoken and written English both to acquire academic content and to demonstrate their learning.”

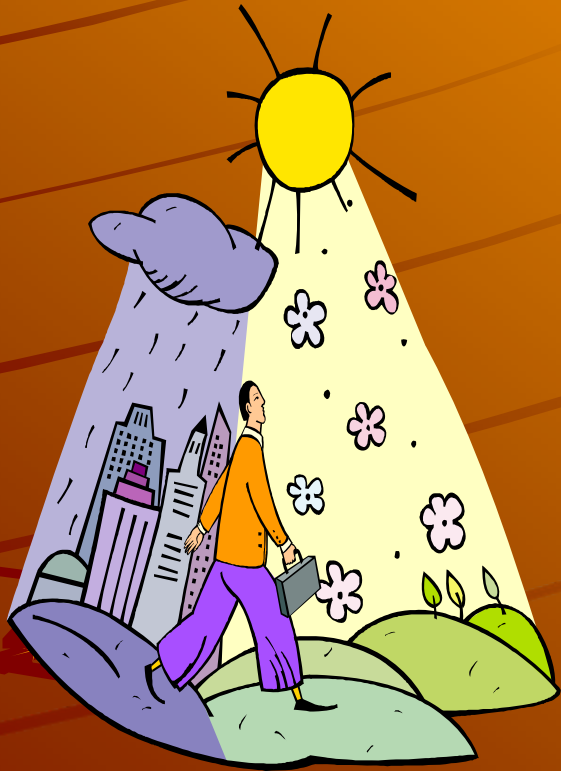
# Teaching reading to ESL students

- Instruction in phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondences
- Phonics instruction: immersion in a literate environment
- Systematic phonics instruction: word recognition and decoding skills





# On the bright side...



- ✦ Although archaic methods of teaching ESL students concentrated more on fluency and did little to help students reach proficiency level academically, new theories, such as SIOP, are helping teachers to include all four language function in every lesson so that students are catching up instead of falling behind.

# Jin's personal experience...



- ✦ Learned English as a second language
- ✦ Acquired both Korean social and academic language before immigrated to the United States.
- ✦ Reading is easier than writing.

In Korean school, I learned to read many books.

However, I never learned to write a formal paper in Korean and I sometimes struggle with writing essays in English.
- ✦ Personally agree with Cummins idea of BICS and CALP and one's own native language skills affecting in learning a second language.

# Robin's personal experience...



- Robin learned Spanish as a foreign language while in an English-speaking country.
- Robin was fluent in English BICS and CALP before attempting to learn Spanish.
- While in Spain, reading and writing were much easier than speaking and listening.

"I read several books in Spanish while I was in Spain, which improved my CALP in Spanish tremendously, just as Cummins suggests."
- Social language proficiency improved drastically with exposure/immersion in Spanish culture.



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